

The Director

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

19 October 1977

OLC: 77-4127/a

The Honorable Elmer Staats
Comptroller General
441 G. Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Staats:

I am writing in response to a 23 September letter to me from Mr. Frank Conahan, of your staff, requesting information with respect to the threat to the Continental United States posed by Soviet bombers.

It is my understanding that Mr. Conahan's request was prompted by your desire, which I can understand, to keep the Armed Services Committees of Congress regularly informed on foreign threats to U.S. weapons systems. However, I have been increasingly concerned about the handling of sensitive foreign intelligence assessments on matters such as this one. As you know, I have an obligation as the Director of Central Intelligence to report directly to the Congress on all substantive national intelligence matters falling within my purview. This obligation leads me to the conclusion that information developed by the Intelligence Community, such as that covered by Mr. Conahan's request, should be reserved for discussion by authorized representatives from the Intelligence Community directly with the appropriate Congressional committees:

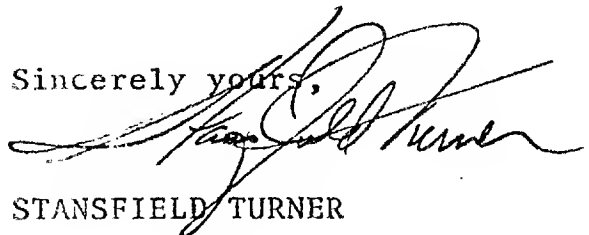
This does not mean that there are not areas where we can usefully be of service to the GAO. We will be happy to provide substantive intelligence briefings on non-compartmented matters in order that your staff have the background necessary to perform their tasks. I suggest that we consider such areas on a case-by-case basis as your needs arise. I would appreciate it if requests for such briefings be forwarded through a central point in your organization to my Office of Legislative Counsel.

With respect to the reference in Mr. Conahan's letter to unsuccessful earlier requests for the information he now seeks, we were reluctant to provide the information because your analysts from Dayton, Ohio, who requested the information were not cleared for access to compartmented information and a significant briefing could not be given at a lower level of sensitivity. I know you understand that I have a primary and imperative obligation to restrict the dissemination of highly sensitive information and, in furtherance of that obligation, I have in fact recently placed a moratorium on the granting of access to information in these categories.

I would be pleased to discuss my position with you personally if you wish.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,



STANSFIELD TURNER

P.S. In all sincerity I must say that my views are colored by the fact that my very sensitive letter on AWITs to you very recently appeared in great detail in the press. My statutory responsibilities to protect the sources of such information force me to take pause.